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ABSTRACT

Based on a research project titled "Institutional Structures for Improving Rural Community Services", this essay addresses the following questions: How can rural communities cope with public services of both limited quantity and quality? How can rural organizations and leadership be developed and maintained to force accountability on government entities? How can the rural community development practitioner enhance his capacity to assist communities in obtaining public services? Specifically, this essay discusses: (1) the rural setting (migration patterns, existing services, trade-offs); (2) the rural economic system (a model depicting the relationship between rural areas and urban trade centers); (3) the variables which influence public service delivery systems (population density; geographic area to be served; distance to major urban center; availability and source of financial resources to support given services; participation of voluntary organizations in service delivery systems; cooperative arrangements among municipal, county, state, regional, and federal agencies; attitudes and expectations of local residents; unique requirements of the service being delivered); (4) leadership and organizational considerations (leadership identification, representation, involvement, and cooperation and organizational influence). (JC)

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PROVIDING RURAL PUBLIC SERVICES:

Leadership and Organizational Considerations

Anne S. Williams
Russell C. Youmans
Donald M. Sorensen

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WESTERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
WRDC Special Report No. 1

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In some respects, the present manuscript is the result of an idea discussed among Donald Sorensen, Harland Padfield, and Howard Tankersley while working at the Western Rural Development Center. They suggested project scientists with assistance from selected extension specialists prepare a document for use by practicing professional and citizen leaders which would summarize and make explicit the policy implications of the research. Since the authors present the research results in a somewhat broader conceptual framework, project researchers cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions. Critical reviews of the manuscript were provided by John Young, Anthropologist, Western Rural Development Center; Bruce John, Rural Sociologist, Cornell University; and Ralph Loomis, Agricultural Economist, Washington State University.

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Related Publication

DELIVERY OF RURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES: SOME IMPLICATIONS AND PROBLEMS, by Garrey E. Carruthers, Eugene C. Erickson, and Kathryn Renner. New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 635: Las Cruces, July 1975.

This report presents a technical summary of the research results and abstracts of the individual state publications.

Ordering Publications

Copies of this and other Western Rural Development Center publications are available from the Western Rural Development Center, 307 Extension Hall, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331.

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Introduction

A principal characteristic of change in American society during the past half century has been the urbanization process. Urbanization, in its current phase, includes movement to the suburbs, thus creating serious public service problems in the urban core of our cities as well as across our vast rural areas. The focus of this publication is on problems of developing and sustaining public services in rural areas, specifically with regard to the organizational and leadership dimensions involved.

To quickly clarify, public services are those goods and services (i.e., education, medical care, roads, sewers, water systems, fire protection, law enforcement, etc.) which require some collective action to fund and/or to produce. As with private goods or services, there are technical problems in producing public services. However, the major additional problems in producing public services are the organizational and leadership requirements for collective action. Concerned people must find some way to work together, hence the need for an effective organizational structure and leadership capability. Unfortunately, development of an effective organizational structure is a time-consuming undertaking, often proceeding with inadequate attention given to the functions to be performed or the resources available. As a consequence, organizational structures often emerge that are ineffective in providing public services intended and, thus, are subject to continuous restructuring in an attempt to correct the situation. Moreover, existing organizations and their leadership, finding their resources and priorities changing from those which called them into being, often find adaptation to be extremely painful, if not impossible. In this setting, Vincent Ostrom observed, "When the possible becomes impossible, we have reason to believe that problems of institutional failure have reached massive proportions."[1] Thus, the problem we would like to address is how to create and maintain effective organizations and leadership structures to provide needed public services to rural areas. Primary attention will be given first to functional considerations involved in providing specific public services. Perhaps this orientation will offer some clues for developing workable public service organizations. Although we will not be able to ad-

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[1] Vincent Ostrom, *The Intellectual Crisis in American Public Administration*, University of Alabama Press, 1973, p. 121.

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dress all issues involved, we would like to stimulate discussion around the following concerns:

(1) How do rural communities cope with public services of both limited quantity and lower quality than those available in urban settings?

(2) How can rural organizations and leadership be developed and maintained which force accountability upon regional, state, and national governmental entities responsible for providing assistance to local units of government?

(3) How can the rural community development practitioner enhance his capacity to assist communities in obtaining adequate public services?

Objectives

The research project from which this publication stems, "Institutional Structures for Improving Rural Community Services," proposed to identify those leadership and organizational variables which might be altered to improve the institutional structures for providing public services to rural areas. Implicitly, the project proposal recognized that many declining rural communities will continue to decline. The objective was not to identify means of promoting economic or industrial development in rural communities of the nation; rather, researchers attempted to identify means by which the quality and range of rural public services might be improved by manipulating or altering the institutions through which services are provided. Accordingly, the objective of this document is to discuss some of the leadership and organizational considerations which influence the provision of rural public services.

The Setting

Census statistics document the dramatic redistribution of population which has been occurring in the United States. Since roughly the turn of the century, people, in increasing numbers, have left the rural areas of our nation for residence in rapidly growing metropolitan areas.[2] The forces contributing to this pattern of migration have been well documented.[3] The adoption of modern agricultural technology has reduced the need for large numbers of agricultural workers. As a result, each decade the United States Census reports a smaller and smaller proportion of the population engaged directly in agricultural employment. Along with modern agricultural technology, federal farm policy has encouraged growth of larger farms, with the result that there are fewer, but larger farms. With declining employment in mining and forestry, as well as agriculture, fewer job opportunities are available in rural areas. Many people have successfully adapted by migrating to industrial and metropolitan centers. However, not all rural residents have had equal opportunity to migrate and successfully acquire new jobs in our urban centers. In many cases, inadequate investment in human services programs in rural areas may have left rural citizens ill-equipped to cope with realities of urban employment and living conditions. Population statistics indicate that those who migrate are usually younger, more highly educated, and, in effect, better able to compete for urban jobs and other opportunities than many of those residents who have remained behind in our declining rural towns. Erickson's study of change in 300 counties in eleven northeastern states found that communities which had not increased in population also had the highest proportion of persons over age 65, and further, these communities were characterized by a lower median educational level, and a lower median family income.[4]

Past patterns of migration have been evaluated in terms of impact on urban areas but impact on the rural point of origin is less well understood. Historically, there has been a tendency to view rural residence as simply a personal location preference. Rural residence was not usually defined as a problem in terms of limited opportunities for employment, or inadequate public services. Ruttan, for example, asserts that the "real cost of full participation (in the dominant American culture), . . . , remains substantially greater for rural farm families than for the families that reside in or near the nation's standard metropolitan areas."[5] Indeed, the cost of access to

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[2] However, recent population estimates for 1970-74 reveal a national turnaround in trends from urban to rural growth. From April 1970 to July 1974, non-metropolitan growth was 5.6% and metropolitan growth was 3.4%. This turnaround will have profound effects upon the provision and mix of needed public services. See Calvin L. Beale, "The Revival of Population Growth in Non-metropolitan America," ERS-605 Economic Research Service-USDA, Washington, D.C., June, 1975; and *Western Wire*, "Rural Population Growth More Than Transient Fad," Western Rural Development Center, Corvallis, Oregon, Volume 1, No. 2, December 1975.

[3] For example, see *The People Left Behind*, President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, USGPO 1967; *A New Life for the Country*, President's Task Force on Rural Development, USGPO, 1970; and *The Quality of Rural Living*, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1971.

[4] Eugene C. Erickson, "Rural Communities in Decline, Consequences for Leadership and Participation," in *Communities Left Behind: Alternatives for Development*, Iowa State University Press: Ames, 1974.

[5] Vernon Ruttan, "Agricultural Policy in an Affluent Society," *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 48, No. 5, December 1966, p. 1108.

urban amenities is generally much higher for the rural population and perhaps out of reach for the large proportion of rural poor.

Population declines have had most direct and dramatic impacts on those areas of the nation where population has always been sparse such as the Great Plains states. Agricultural and mining communities particularly have been heavily affected by population out-migration. As people have left declining small towns, small businesses have closed, commercial establishments have been boarded up, the tax base has declined, and the quality and range of local public services have not kept up with those of urban areas, and frequently have declined. Thus, rural citizens have been forced to accept lower levels of locally available public and private services than their urban counterparts. Ruttan states that the mix of goods and services consumed by rural people " . . . was inferior in terms of both quality and the range of items included, not only the areas of health, education, housing, and cultural amenities, but also in terms of the commodity components of food and clothing."[6] These costs of rural living often are labeled "economic costs"—rural citizens must pay more for fewer and lower-quality services—and "social cost"—rural residents must learn to do without a full range of public and private services or incur the costs of traveling to distant urban centers where such services are available.

Albrecht reported that Utah ruralites listed absence of adequate medical and health facilities as the most serious problems faced by their communities. Over half of the respondents in two rural Utah counties indicated they would have utilized physicians' services more often had they been available.[7] Researchers in New Mexico also reported that rural southern New Mexico residents use more specialized health services less often, travel farther to do so, and rate their access to such services lower than do urban New Mexico residents.[8]

There is some evidence, however, that rural residents may be willing to trade-off fewer services for what they consider to be the "good life in the countryside." From 74 to 80 percent of Utah's rural residents (depending on county studied) indicated they were satisfied with living in their rural communities. Only 42 percent of the Utah urban respondents expressed this sentiment about urban communities. Although rural residents in Utah admitted their counties had less than adequate public health services, Utah ruralities agreed that access to the outdoors, open spaces, and friendliness of rural people were offsetting advantages of rural living.[9] Similarly, Williams and Dick concluded that rural residents in Montana recognized services available in their rural communities were inadequate as compared to public services available in urban areas. However, residents in six rural Montana counties believed that services were "excellent, considering the size of the population and the geographic area served." In no case did rural residents indicate a willingness to migrate to urban areas where presumably they could receive higher-quality public services. In fact, satisfaction with the quality of rural living was quite high.[10]

In the recent past, many people have expressed their reaction to conditions in rural areas by moving out. At the same time, however, some of the urban labor force have migrated to rural areas; in effect, people have "voted their preferences with their feet." Drawing from Hirschman, however, contemporary issues of rural development may now have prompted people to begin "voting with their voices rather than their feet." Hirschman defines "voice" in this context as: "any attempt to change, rather than escape from, an objectionable state of affairs . . ."[11]

Hirschman argues that the use of "exit" (voting with your feet) in bringing about a change is in essence an economic act, while the use of "voice" is a political act.[12] "Voice" can be used when the issues are relatively few, but "exits" will prevail when the issues are overwhelming either in size or number. In the past, many farm people have used "exit" to accommodate to economic conditions in rural areas, but new awareness of rural problems may indicate an increasing tendency to use "voice" or political action to improve welfare of rural populations. If Hirschman is correct, it may be easier now for the community development practitioner to assist rural residents in identifying critical rural development issues and to serve as a catalyst in the formation of citizen-based development organizations.

Although many rural areas have experienced reductions in employment opportunities, local public

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 1108.

[7] Stan Albrecht, "Rural Development: Its Dimensions and Focus," Department of Sociology, Utah State University, Logan, 1974.

[8] Garrey E. Carruthers, N. Scott Urquhart, Clyde Eastman, and Kathryn Renner, "Health Utilization Patterns in Southern New Mexico," Department of Agricultural Economics, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, 1974.

[9] Albrecht, op. cit.

[10] Anne S. Williams and Kitty K. Dick, "An Assessment of Public Services in Selected Eastern Montana Counties," Montana Experiment Station Research Report, Montana State University, Bozeman, 1975.

[11] Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Response to Declines in Organizations and States,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 30.

[12] Ibid., p. 15.

service requirements have generally expanded. As a result, the budgets of most local governments have grown (aside from increases due to inflation) and increased taxes have further burdened the remaining population. In addition, environmental concerns have increased demands for such things as sewer and water systems.

However, effective demand for public services is based on the economic viability of individual persons and families. Rural areas experiencing economic and population decline are confronted with a shrinking resource base from which public services can be supported. Thus, while desires for public services increase proportionately more than for private goods with rising incomes, the reverse also is true. As real per capita income decreases and fewer tax dollars become available, the aggregate effective demand for public services will decline. Even in rural areas where aggregate income is being maintained at a rather constant level, while per capita income is increasing due to population out-migration, the cost of increased public services imposes higher per capita tax burdens on the remaining population. In both instances, real economic constraints impinge upon the collective ability to finance desired improvements.

Rural Economic System

The tightly knit, self-sufficient community of rural literary fame no longer exists. The economic and social ties of rural areas are frequently to nearby larger urban communities rather than within rural communities as once was the case. In a seminar at the Western Rural Development Center, Barkley described the rural community as representing a "thru-put economic system" as opposed to the circular flow system discussed early in every elementary economics text.[13] The thru-put system illustrates the economic ties to the outside, largely urban, world. (See diagram below.)

The households, representing consumers and owners of productive resources (agricultural, mining, and timber) and taxpayers, may or may not purchase their consumption and production goods from local businesses; in fact, increasingly, local merchants and towns are by-passed as consumers seek advantages of larger markets. Just as the private rural market is linked to outside urban markets, public services are dependent on outside institutions for financial and technical assistance if not complete production and delivery. In fact, this linkage with and dependency upon the outside world weakens local community ability to collectively marshal internal resources, even when available, to provide services locally. This is so because local economic resources are unevenly distributed among community residents, and often those having the wherewithal to underwrite public services expenditures are not economically or socially oriented toward the local community, for example, corporate-owned resource-based industries. Since many of their economic, social, and services contacts reach beyond the rural community, these residents may tend to grow increasingly insensitive to the broader needs of the local community. Large farmers in areas of extensive agriculture may not reveal interest in supporting local services while local businessmen of limited means may be struggling to upgrade local facilities. Thus, as wealth continues to be extracted from the area, bypassing the rural community, the community becomes increasingly subjected to irreversible economic decline.

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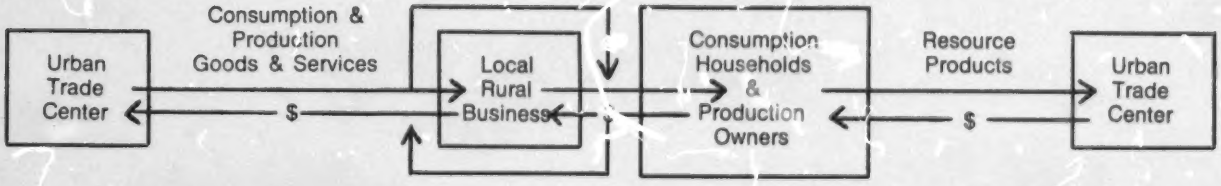
[13] Paul Barkley, "Small Businesses in Rural Towns," Seminar for Western Rural Development Center, Corvallis, Oregon, December 19, 1974.



Characteristics of Public Goods and Services

The majority of existing economic knowledge relates to decision-making concerned with private goods and services. The ownership of the product or service of private economic activity is relatively clear and the distribution of the benefits is fairly well understood. Many public services present another problem, however. In pure form, all of society can exercise a claim on the benefits resulting from production of a public service. So potential distribution is very broad and may cause considerable stress in determining production levels and the practical distribution pattern. It seems useful to examine this problem briefly before proceeding.

First, we do know something about public services. For the brief discussion that follows, we will refer to all publicly provided goods and services as "public goods." This conforms to existing practice of political scientists and economists working in this field. A pure public good is: a good or service produced by a specific group in such a manner that the consumption by any member of the group does not reduce the access of any other group member to the good or service. A classic example is a light house. Here some group provides a beam of light with publicized characteristics from a known location. Any individual in the group can use the "good" and not reduce the benefits available to others in the group. But here lies one of the most serious problems—any non-group member could likewise utilize the public good; hence, the total benefits may be underestimated and the sacrifices[14] borne only by a sub-set of the total population benefiting.[15]

The non-exclusive nature of public goods surely does influence their means of production. Individuals are encouraged to be "free riders" by refraining from joining the group producing the public good and subsequently enjoying the benefits at no personal sacrifice. As a result, the public good may be seriously under-produced and exploited because all benefits are not captured in a manner to provide sufficient incentive for adequate production.

It should be noted here that public "bads" can also be produced. In this situation a group may produce a good or service which creates problems for non-group members. In this case the producing group is able to capture benefits in excess of their sacrifices by forcing sacrifices on outside groups; here the "public bad" will be over-produced since total sacrifices which accrue directly to the producing group are less than their total benefits. An example is water pollution generated by a city with no sewage treatment facilities. By polluting the river, one city keeps its treatment costs low, while a downstream city will need extra water treatment facilities to clean up the problem. The upstream town may thrive due to lower costs to them and export their "bad" costs to the downstream city. In this case, the upstream city is a free rider enjoying benefits with little or no sacrifice. This type of situation can exist for many publicly provided goods, i.e., let another taxing district provide the parks, libraries, or hospitals, etc. This frequently results in less than adequate levels of service, because sacrifices are not equally borne by those benefiting. These problems also increase the need for sensitive local governments. Hirschman indicates that these non-market situations do not usually permit "exit" (voting with one's feet) as an option to the public (in the last case—the downstream town). The most mobile individuals may be able to walk away from the problem, but many are locked into the situation and "voice" may be the only mechanism open for expressing their needs.[16]

The extent to which publicly provided goods and services are "pure public goods" varies considerably. A sewer and water system fairly well benefits those who are hooked to the system. Even here, however, pollution caused by those who are not hooked to the system affects those who are. But streets and roads are generally open for all to use and other public goods have similar non-exclusive characteristics. These characteristics of public goods surely do affect the jurisdictional domain, the organizational form, and the leadership structure of public service organizations.

Variables Which Influence Public Service Delivery Systems

A variety of institutional structures, serving a rather wide range of geographic areas and with a variety of functional purposes, have been organized to provide public service in states in which this research was conducted. In summary, variables which seem to influence the characteristics of public service delivery systems include: 1) population density; 2) geographic area to be served; 3) distance to major metropolitan centers; 4) availability and source of financial resources to support given services; 5) participation of voluntary organizations in service delivery systems; 6) cooperative arrange-

[14] We use the term "sacrifices" instead of "costs" to emphasize the fact that more than economic issues are involved

[15] An excellent discussion of the problem this causes in securing leadership is presented in: Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, Harvard University Press, 1965.

[16] Hirschman, A. O., op. cit., p. 55.

ments among municipal, county, state, regional, and federal governmental agencies; 7) attitudes and expectations of local residents concerning required levels of public services; and 8) unique requirements of the service being delivered. In every case, these variables, either singly or in combination, seem to have a dramatic influence upon the form and structure of service delivery systems and the resulting quality and variety of locally available public services.

Population Density. When populations are small and physically scattered over large geographic expanses, necessary services cannot be provided at the same per capita cost as is possible in urban centers. Further, rural residents' access to services is reduced by the physical barrier of geographical space. In areas of sparse population and where there are great distances between communities, per capita costs of providing services increase dramatically with the result that fewer and lower-quality services (as judged by urban standards) are available. The service delivery system, therefore, must be designed to achieve as much efficiency as possible given local economic and physical barriers.

Economic Efficiency. It seems appropriate here to comment on the issue of economic efficiency. Economic efficiency is concerned with value of output per unit of input, hence oriented toward cost considerations. However, economic efficiency is not the single most important objective of people needing public services. Rather, people must first determine the quality and quantity of a given public service desired. For example, community residents may decide that their school system should provide a certain range of educational programs of a specified quality, even though cost per pupil may well exceed that of the average school in urban areas. Initial attention is on specification of the nature of the educational programs desired; then, and only then, does the criterion of economic efficiency become an important consideration. Whereas specification of the public service is concerned with the *what* question, economic efficiency has to do with the *how* of providing that agreed upon public service. Efficiency should be considered a criterion in selecting a means to an end but should not become an end in itself.

Geographic Area. In addition to problems posed by vast geographic spaces, physical barriers such as mountains, rivers, and inclement weather conditions interfere with access to necessary services. In some cases, communication and/or transportation networks can be designed to reduce problems of geographic isolation from necessary services. In all cases, however, an effective service delivery system must take into consideration and be designed to overcome unique problems posed by physical or geographic barriers.

Distance to Urban Centers. Every community cannot expect to offer all varieties of public services at the local level. Very specialized public services are not only expensive to provide, but only a very small proportion of the population eventually will need to use such services. Specialized services are, therefore, most efficiently provided on a regional basis. An example would be highly specialized medical services which are expensive to provide, not frequently used by the majority of the population, and thus are located in larger regional centers where the population and economic bases are large enough to support them. However, residents of surrounding hinterland communities who require such specialized services may be too distant from the regional center and thus not have adequate access to its services (and, in fact, may not even know the services exist). Therefore, these factors of citizen awareness and distance to the service must be considered and incorporated into design of the service delivery system.

Financial Resources. Both the amount as well as the sources of public service revenues influence the quality and variety of locally available public services. Clearly, if revenues diminish, some services will be eliminated and/or others will be curtailed. This has been a major problem for those rural communities that have been losing population, and perhaps their tax base, over the past two or three decades. However, many locally available public services have been financed in large part by state and federal revenues (hospitals, highways, and a variety of social services are examples). Such funds are provided as part of federally and/or state established service programs and conditions under which they may be used are also established primarily by the funding agency. In such cases, local authorities may have little or no influence on scope or structure of the resulting service delivery system. This is an acknowledged disadvantage of federal and/or state funding but, for some services, may not be a serious problem. The point is, the conditions under which revenues are granted should be carefully analyzed with particular attention to their impact on the quality and accessibility of the resulting public services, including the attitudes of the residents who are to receive the program.

Voluntary Organizations. The potentially valuable contribution of voluntary citizen organizations to local service delivery systems should not be overlooked. Their role is especially critical in rural areas where local units of government cannot afford to hire professional assistance in addressing the wide range of problems being confronted. Voluntary groups have demonstrated their ability to work effectively with local units of government to provide services which the community otherwise would do without.

For example, in Sedgwick County, Colorado, the Board of County Commissioners formalized procedures whereby voluntary groups can work closely with county government through a process of incremental comprehensive planning.[17] The Board appoints a voluntary planning commission that facilitates and administers the various increments of a continuously developing comprehensive plan. When individuals become concerned with a specific issue, they request appointment as a sub-committee to the planning commission to study the problem and develop plans (e.g., water drainage, irrigation system, municipal power, sanitation system, etc.). In addition, the planning commission may recognize an issue needing analysis and ask interested individuals to serve on a sub-committee for that purpose. Sub-committee members in both cases are those with a vital interest in the given problem under analysis and therefore are personally committed to seeking a solution. The planning commission recognizes that an incremental comprehensive plan must be developed by groups of individuals interested in, or affected by, the decision to be made and that no single voluntary group can be expected to document all components of the plan. Residents' interest in the specific problem and its solution has provided sufficient incentive to maintain their involvement. In the process, sub-committee members have learned a great deal about their community and have begun to develop their ability to govern themselves.

The community development professional can play a significant role in facilitating the development and growth of the incremental comprehensive planning process. In this role he might serve as:

1) counsel to the Commission as they determine policy, appoint sub-committees, conduct public hearings, and;

2) documenter or recorder of sub-committee plans and decisions so as to facilitate communication among and between citizen organizations and other community members.

Cooperative Governmental Arrangements. Many small, rural communities simply are not able to raise sufficient local revenue or technical management capability to support very basic and necessary community services. (Examples would include police, fire protection, educational facilities, or mental health services.) In such cases, cooperative arrangements with other levels of government are often made for the purpose of receiving funding, pooling revenues to finance joint projects, contracting service responsibilities, and so on. However, such arrangements often affect the service delivery system, and their consequences should be examined prior to initiating new, formal, cooperative agreements. To illustrate, it is very common in some states with areas of sparse population for county and municipal governments to pool their financial resources for the provision of services such as city-county libraries. If, however, the county is geographically large and a mobile library unit is not also provided, residents of the open country end up subsidizing a service they use only rarely (if at all) because of time and travel costs they must individually incur to have access to the distant facility.

The cooperative venture may provide opportunities to retain political identity (voice) and important elements of local program control, and yet take advantage of the economic efficiencies made possible by larger jurisdictions. Oftentimes, however, the financial resources and needed technical or management skills are effectively available only in larger urban centers. The local challenge then becomes one of developing the organization and leadership necessary to force accountability on regional, state, and federal agencies to acquire services for the local community on largely local terms. This challenge is particularly difficult when certain local politically powerful people are not sympathetic to the needs of the community as identified by other less powerful members of the community. The key is that responsiveness of government at all levels can be enhanced if participation in the decision-making structure is broadly based.[18]

Attitudes of Local Residents. The expectations and eventual demands citizens make on local government officials dramatically influence the quality and type of locally available public services. As services deteriorate in communities of declining population, citizens often cope by resigning themselves to the situation, by doing without, or by traveling to distant communities where needed services are available. Miller, for example, concluded that Utah ruralites' perception of need for a medical service varied according to the availability of that service. Those citizens with services more readily available felt they must visit a physician at an earlier stage of illness than did those persons who had to travel considerable distances to reach health care practitioners.[19] Some rural citizens, however, expect higher-quality public services than are locally available and these expectations often result in the forma-

[17] Dale K. Pfau, "Research in County Incremental Comprehensive Planning," paper presented to the Land Use Symposium-Annual Research Conference, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, March 2-3, 1973.

[18] Methods by which the community development practitioner can facilitate involvement and community action will be discussed below.

[19] Michael K. Miller, *Toward A Measurement of the Adequacy of Health Services in Rural Utah*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Sociology, Utah State University, Logan, 1972.

tion of active voluntary organizations which successfully force new service delivery arrangements.[28]

Characteristics of the Specific Public Service. Different organizational arrangements are needed to satisfy unique requirements of different public services; no one organizational structure will serve as an adequate model for delivery of all rural public services. For example, some services as fire protection, law enforcement, and certain types of health care are "crisis oriented"—the service must be immediately available or it is of minimal value. Services as these require a delivery system that can be immediately responsive to all potential users within the service area. Other services as mental health care are usually provided on a more routine or regular basis. However, in areas of large geographic space and sparse population, the service delivery system must be designed so that potential clients have regular and easy access to available services. Sometimes professionals who "ride circuit" periodically and on a given time schedule to locations throughout the service area can help reduce geographical barriers to service delivery. The point is, however, that the service delivery system must be adapted to the unique characteristics of the service being delivered.

Several issues seem to be interrelated, but difficult to sort out. A case in point: 1) The type of public service does make some difference in the type of organization established to produce and deliver the service; for example, a police district would not generally adopt the same organizational form as a port authority. 2) If organizational form differs, so also might the jurisdictional area of the service organization. The extent of domain of the service would be expected to affect the organization, with some being very local and others national in jurisdiction. 3) Again, if jurisdictional area and organizational structure vary depending on the nature of the specific public good or service provided, then also we might expect the leadership structure to vary depending on the nature of the specific public service. The possibility of this quite complex structure surrounding production and delivery of public goods adds problems for the field practitioner. The practitioner faces a complex situation in which a general recommendation may not be appropriate; rather, the complexity added by nature of the public good, organizational form, and leadership structure may require a great deal of detailed analysis prior to developing any workable action strategy.

[28] More will be said about the function of local leadership in the section following entitled "Leadership and Organizational Considerations."

Leadership and Organizational Considerations

The influence of diverse organizational and leadership structures on provision of high-quality rural public services is, perhaps, the critical research question for those concerned with improving conditions in rural communities. The inadequacy of local governmental and other institutions to cope with problems involving both the city and the country has been much discussed. For example, Williams and Lassey note that local government has not had the geographic breadth, legal power, or financial capability to deal with area-wide problems.[21] State government has found it difficult to deal with the multiplicity of local jurisdictions originated for purposes of planning, administration, and economic or social development. Federal government lacks the local support or proximity to adapt national programs and priorities to needs of sub-state areas. The inefficiencies and duplication at each level of government have greatly diluted the effectiveness of many well-meaning public service efforts. Local officials and citizens have often been immensely frustrated by inability of any single governmental jurisdiction to solve local problems or effectively influence current or new state and federal programs. However, local units of government provide communities with a significant voice, perhaps the only readily available one, to express their needs and concerns to the governments above them. As such, local government units have the opportunities to "fine-tune" the broader policies of state and federal programs as they relate to local conditions. In fact, there appears to be a growing desire among people at the local level to have more to say about what is coming down from higher levels of government and to want more direct control over how programs are developed.

Leadership Considerations

Observers have often noted the reluctance of local governmental units to draw upon the greater resources available to them, at least in theory, from other levels of government. For example, Wilkening notes that: "The reluctance of local governmental units to become a part of integrated governmental structures and regional commissions has hindered progress in the handling of the problems of education, health, recreation, and many other services needed in rural areas."[22] Such resistance perhaps can be attributed in part to: 1) an unwillingness of local leaders to give up power and positions; 2) a conflict of interest among occupational and residential groups; 3) a lack of knowledge of problems and means for their solution; or 4) an inability of other levels of government to assist local communities on local terms. Outside bureaucracies pose threats to the power of local leaders, which may be only reluctantly given up due to their own self interests. In addition, the local leader desires to resist the outside bureaucracy to preserve, at least, the illusion of local control. As a result, leaders tend to distrust bureaucracies and tend to neutralize their effectiveness by co-opting bureaucratic program efforts. At times their manipulation enables leaders to maintain their influence, but reduces real benefits that could be generated in the community. In any event, it appears that many local community leaders are reluctant, or perhaps for other reasons have not been able, to develop linkages to organizations and resources outside the local community.

In this respect it is important to comment upon Roland Warren's distinction between "horizontal" and "vertical" ties.[23] The functioning of local community units (education, government, etc.) requires at least some minimum of local interaction and, to effectively provide local public services, local inter-organizational linkages must be developed. The relationship of the local community units to one another and their pattern of local interaction are called the community's "horizontal pattern." In contrast, local community units are also tied directly to systems of interaction outside of the community. This latter pattern of interaction is called the community's "vertical pattern."

Warren makes the case that, as our society becomes more urban and bureaucratic in nature, horizontal ties among local community units become weaker while vertical ties of local community units to the extra-community systems of which they are a part, become increasingly stronger. If concurrent efforts are not made to maintain the strength of the horizontal community ties, the ability of local community leaders to provide public services at the local level is greatly diminished. In effect, fragmented provision of community services is encouraged by simultaneous growth of vertical community ties and weakening of horizontal community linkages. The effect of vertical ties on the local community is evident when one considers potential impacts of federal government programs on the functioning of service organi-

[21] Anne S. Williams and William R. Lassey, "Regional Planning and Development: Organization and Strategies," Cooperative Experiment Station Research Report No. 58, Montana State University, Bozeman, 1974.

[22] E. E. Wilkening, "Some Perspectives on Change in Rural Societies," *Rural Sociology*, 29, March 1964, p. 10.

[23] Roland L. Warren, *The Community in America*, Chicago, Illinois, Rand, McNally and Company, 1963.

zations at the local community level. Indeed, slight changes in policies and dynamics of the mass institutions can have profound effects on the rural way of life and on its major social and economic institutions.[24]

As stronger vertical ties impinge on local communities, dramatic changes in the functions and structure of these communities are experienced. For example, in a case study of a small rural community (undergoing extensive change due to the growth of a nearby small city), Payne indicates that the community leaders anticipated changes in the function of their town and that the leaders had rather definite ideas concerning the form that change would take. However, these leaders preferred changes other than those they expected and thought of themselves as better prepared to assist in changes they preferred, rather than in changes they expected to take place. This case study points out that local community leaders had virtually no influence over outside forces which were fundamentally affecting the future of their community. Likewise, they considered themselves ill-prepared to assist their community in adapting to changes that were likely to occur. Payne concludes that ". . . the very people who must guide the process are rural (not urban or suburban) in background, training, and value orientation, and therefore their leadership must be exerted under unfamiliar and/or unfavored conditions, with each being called upon to do things he does not know how to do or is to some extent reluctant to do, even though he has accepted the responsibility of office or position."[25]

A separate study of leadership in small rural communities describes two communities in which no structure of leadership was identified.[26] This condition of "amorphous" leadership was thought to be associated with absentee ownership and dominance exerted over the community by a metropolitan regional center. This last study suggests implications of growing vertical ties to systems of interaction outside the community. One might conclude that these two communities were changing functions in response to social forces outside the community and that virtually no local leadership was exercised to direct or control events within the community.

The reluctance of community-oriented local leaders to become involved with organizations and agencies from regional, state, and federal levels, in many cases, appears to have some basis in fact. All too often local citizens have been manipulated by professionals at higher levels of government who view people as resources for serving the ends of the institutions they represent. Rural citizens have had too many such experiences and, hence, have become extremely wary of "pop-up exercises" which promise much, but in the end, increasingly impinge upon their freedom as individuals and communities to exercise control over their destinies. Vertically oriented organizations tend to become increasingly self-serving, often forgetting their founding purpose was to serve people in their struggle to acquire public goods and services in order to enjoy an enriched quality of living. The local community development practitioner is in a unique position to reverse this trend by attempting to sensitize local organizations to ways of effectively serving communities. Frequently, he must first recognize that continued attention to the vertical organization of the agency he represents has produced certain internal organizational efficiencies, yet that organization or agency may have failed to be effective in meeting the needs of people and communities supposedly being served. Increased attention should be given to facilitating greater horizontal integration within the community so that relevant leaders and organizations are involved and communicating effectively in describing their problems, in seeking solutions, and in carrying out action.[27] In this way, the community development practitioner can assist the community to develop the capability to force accountability of organizations and agencies with which the local community must work to acquire needed public services.

From results of past research, there can be no doubt that effectiveness of community-oriented local leaders is critical to the futures of many small, rural communities. One comparative study of leadership in two rural towns indicated that the character and activity of the leadership of the community were deciding factors in whether the town grew, declined, or disappeared altogether.[28] In a comparative study of three communities in Mississippi, Reddy and Kaufman concluded that in one community the top leadership group participated more actively in community development organizations. This community had more development programs and a stronger organization, and residents more actively supported

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[24] Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1958, p. 103.

[25] Ray Payne, "Leadership and Perceptions of Change in a Village Confronted with Urbanism," *Social Forces*, 41, March 1963, p. 269.

[26] Ernest A. T. Barth, "Community Influence Systems: Structure and Change," *Social Forces*, 40, October 1961, pp. 58-63.

[27] Dale K. Pfau, "Vertical and Horizontal Integration Processes," Mimeo, Colorado Cooperative Extension Service, Fort Collins, 1972.

[28] William Simon and John H. Gagnon, "The Decline and Fall of the Small Town," *Trans-Action*, 4, April 1967, p. 51.

their community leaders and local organizations.[29] Numerous other studies have pointed out that rural people tend to have a relatively high anti-organization, pro-individualistic bias, both of which are inversely related to organizational know-how, adaptability, skills, and experience. Recognizing the critical importance of local community leadership, Reddy and Kaufman recommended programs to initiate and strengthen leadership training in state and local development efforts.[30]

Mancur Olson's discussion of the incentives which motivate leadership involvement in group activities is instructive:

> Though all of the members of the group therefore have a common interest in obtaining this collective benefit, they have no common interest in paying the cost (including the leadership) of providing that collective good.[31]

Olson further argues:

> . . . in a very small group, where each member gets a substantial proportion of the total gain simply because there are few others in the group, a collective good can often be provided . . . for the greater the interest in the collective good by any single member, the greater the likelihood that that member will get such a significant proportion of the total benefit from the collective good that he will gain from seeing that the good is provided, even if he has to pay all of the cost himself.[32]

If this thesis is correct, it provides an obvious clue for identifying potential leaders in a community; leaders are most likely to be those citizens who believe they will benefit most, perhaps enough to bear the sacrifices (including leadership), from efforts to secure locally desired public goods or services.

The community practitioner should keep in mind that he is unlikely to identify a single set of leaders who actually control most of what happens in a community. Rather, a pluralistic situation is more likely to prevail in which power distributions within the community are temporary and constantly shifting depending upon the issue. Different groups and their leadership will tend to emerge in support of different kinds of public services. A group of citizens interested in a new sewer system is likely to be the influential leaders in regard to this public service, whereas another group might provide leadership in acquiring health care facilities.

Nevertheless, there may be some economically and politically powerful people who will attempt to maintain their controlling interest no matter what issue is at stake. Such people must be made aware of the real needs of others in the community and of the fact that meeting these needs will serve their own interests as well.

The older social action models which presumed a single, predominant leadership group, and which are so familiar to many community development practitioners, are not appropriate when dealing with contemporary rural communities. The astute and cautious community developer will not be trapped by the notion that there is one set of influentials to whom he must respond. On the contrary, if he learns to listen effectively, he will be able to identify and nurture multiple leadership groups interested in working on a variety of specific community problems.

However, well-trained, competent local leaders are not all that is required for successful community development. Montana researchers report that in a study of a seven-county federation in south-central Montana, public acceptance and effectiveness of a multi-county federation were limited because the leadership of the organization was overly representative of rural, agricultural interests; 70 percent of the population of the multi-county area resided in an urban trade center while all of the federation leaders were from the surrounding hinterland communities. The researchers concluded that representativeness of local community leaders is an important ingredient for successful development programs.[33] Texas researchers concur with this statement in their recommendation that, since it is difficult in our society for citizens to participate effectively in all issues of concern to them, it is imperative that at least the leadership be representative of citizens' interests.[34] Furthermore, under-representation of one segment of the population can severely inhibit promising development efforts. Mississippi researchers found that the more successful local development programs involved a cross-section of leaders representative of the community.[35]

In a comparative study of three Mississippi communities, Reddy and Kaufman concluded that an organizational and leadership structure will promote

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[29] S. K. Reddy and Harold F. Kaufman, "Community Structure and Development of Services in Three Mississippi Communities," Working Paper, Mississippi State University, State College, 1974.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Olson, op. cit., p. 21. Item in parentheses added by the present authors.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[33] Anne S. Williams, C. Jack Gilchrist, and William R. Lassey, "Leader Attitudinal Orientations in a Multi-County Area," Department of Sociology, Montana State University, Bozeman, 1972.

[34] Wayne H. Oberle and Kevin R. Stowers, "Regional Development in Diagnostic Perspective," Mimeo, Department of Rural Sociology, Texas A & M University, College Station, 1971.

[35] Reddy and Kaufman, op. cit.

development best when there is an effective relationship between the volunteer participant, the leader, and the agency specialist; the leadership of the development organization must be representative of citizens as well as relevant agencies and organizations within the community. The authors also recognized that leaders must be easily identified by fellow community leaders and that the larger and more active the top leadership group, the more they are recognized by both leaders and other community residents.[36] This finding was supported by research in New York where results indicate that those leaders judged to have high influence in the community were also those who were significantly more active both with citizens, volunteer organizations, and other groups within the community.[37] However, the effective community development professional will be alert to emergence of potential leadership from competing interest groups having particular public service needs and will help them become a viable participant in community decision-making.

Organizational Considerations

Clearly, community organizations generally fail to represent all interest groups within the community, and one may raise the question of "how representative community organizations need to be to succeed in their objectives." As a general rule, community development organizations need to involve citizens who represent the viewpoints of groups likely to benefit as well as those expected to assume some sacrifices as a result of proposed action. If sacrifices and benefits accrue equally to all members of the community, the question of "representativeness" is lessened (although this rarely, if ever, happens). If net benefits are not positive, however, one needs to question reasonableness of the proposed activity.

In Montana, Williams and Lassey concluded that grass-roots efforts to improve community conditions were initiated in response to citizen dissatisfaction with existing local, state, and federal programs designed to meet area needs. In the absence of such dissatisfaction, however, successful grass-roots organizational efforts did not develop. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that when regional organizations were locally initiated and controlled, citizens identified more readily with the organizations, participated more extensively, and were capable of developing programs more responsive to local needs.[38]

The conclusions of research in Mississippi, Montana, New York, and Texas are consistent: organizations at the local community level, or at the regional level, will be effective only to the extent that they elicit enthusiastic involvement and cooperation of local influential citizens; if the leadership of the community is not involved or represented fully in the organizational structure, programs and proposals of that organization will not achieve their promised objectives.

Frequently, the field practitioner initiates his community development activities by identifying locally influential citizens or perhaps simply accomplishes a self-introduction to the prominent local leaders. The field practitioner then begins his process of assisting development by trying to facilitate public involvement in local decision-making. The definition of a problem, identification of alternatives and their consequences, taking action, and evaluation are familiar activities to the practitioner. However, definition of the specific public goods to be offered, organization of their service delivery systems, delineation of jurisdictional areas to be served, and so on, are decisions that frequently are made by bureaucratic agencies outside the community. The agencies that provide public services develop a tendency, along with other large, private, and public organizations, to develop programs consistent with internal organizational objectives. The general public, or in this case, the rural community, may have almost no effective influence upon established agency goals. Gordon Tullock argues this is the usual case and professionals within such agencies advance fastest by meeting the organization's internal objectives (management by objective) with little regard to the effectiveness of the program in terms of public service as evaluated by non-agency objectives.[39] If Tullock is correct, the role and assertiveness of local community groups is of primary importance in forcing agencies to be responsive to non-agency objectives. Under these conditions, the challenge to the community development practitioner is to strengthen horizontal integration at the community level so that citizens can acquire the power to force accountability of public agencies at higher levels of government.

On the basis of past performance it is difficult to be enthusiastic concerning the influence of local groups on programs of large outside organizations, public or private. But, there are enough solid examples to offer some encouragement for continued efforts. Block grants under revenue sharing could be a step in this direction. Some states have passed enabling legislation for increased local autonomy.[40] Specific examples of local-outside organization co-

[36] Reddy and Kaufman, op. cit.

[37] Eugene C. Erickson and Bruce M. John, "The Structure of a Rural Leadership System and the Delineation and Solution of Public Problems," Working Paper, Department of Rural Sociology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1973.

[38] Williams and Lassey, op. cit., p. 105.

[39] Gordon Tullock, *The Politics of Bureaucracy*, Public Affairs Press: Washington, D.C., 1965.

[40] Examples would be county "home rule" legislation.

operation are known to most community development practitioners. Frequently, credit goes to a few very well informed and articulate leaders who have worked through the political or bureaucratic structure to reach policy people and there have presented overwhelming evidence in support of the local position. In modifying the organizational program, the outside organization gains "grass roots" support, too frequently missing, and may justifiably be proud of the turn of events. But inability to duplicate these situations is a real challenge for all interested in community development.

Providing Rural Public Services

The need for functional relationships between government organizations and voluntary citizens' organizations is reaffirmed by Mississippi researchers. They found that organization and leadership structures are more likely to promote development when there is a balance in participation and cooperation between voluntary associations and government agencies. Their data suggest that strong and viable voluntary citizens' organizations are essential for sustained community development programs.[41]

Government programs designed and implemented "from the top down" have been notably unsuccessful. To effectively provide high-quality rural public services, regional, state or county organizations must receive enthusiastic support of the local citizenry or its representative leaders. In other words, regardless of the structure of the development organization, it can be functional only if it has grass-roots support at the local community level; in practice, this usually means that the proposed activities of such organizations are expected to result in positive net benefits to the community. Essentially, local citizens must be involved or participating in these activities in meaningful ways.

McEntire asserts that development of regional organizations is a direct result of the inadequacy of existing structures of local government; mainly, local governments are ineffective in coping with modern problems (they lack both financial and technical resources); and, jurisdictional boundaries may not fit with the geographical shape of problems and social needs.[42] Montana researchers also conclude that there is an explicit recognition of inadequacies of the boundaries of many existing governmental units.[43] Texas researchers report that multi-county organizations have formed in that state for the following reasons: 1) to comply with federal and state regulations; 2) to fulfill local interests; 3) to receive state and federal funding; 4) to facilitate administration; 5) to localize services (from a statewide to an areawide basis); 6) to overcome overlapping and independent efforts; and 7) to overcome outdated means of coping with many diverse problems.[44] The rationale for regional organizations seems compelling. Fujimoto and Zone state: "It seems that any fair-sized community *must* depend on other larger ones for at least some of its needs . . . Present-day mobility makes the interdependent type of relationship commonplace and quite often desirable."[45] So, we appear to be on the horns of a dilemma; on the one hand, existing service delivery arrangements, including financial, managerial-technical, and leadership capabilities, have not resulted in sufficiently high-quality rural public services. On the other hand, regional service delivery systems have been notably inadequate in accomplishing the goals they set for themselves. Local citizens generally have not responded enthusiastically to regional organizations which they regard as bureaucratic schemes (from the top down) imposed upon them by state or federal governments. They perhaps view these regional constructs as further attempts at strengthening vertical integration (i.e., restructuring vertical organization to increase efficiency in achieving bureaucratic goals at the expense of dealing effectively with local community needs and goals). One challenge to the community development practitioner is to assist local people in sensitizing policy-makers to the need to develop policies that would allow for strengthening horizontal organization.

In his work with the community, the field practitioner can initiate and nourish the process whereby many more people of a community become involved, perhaps through their representatives, in identifying and carrying out action with respect to their own problems. Emphasis might best be placed upon developing linkages among the various community organizations so that their joint efforts might culminate in provision of needed community goods and services. The concern of the community development practitioner should be on the appropriate group for providing a particular public services ability and community integration to resolve the problem. The basis upon which horizontal integration is facilitated at the local community level is through effective communication between citizens and among their community organizations.

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[41] S. K. Reddy and Harold F. Kaufman, "A Community Approach to Rural Development," Mississippi State University, State College, 1972.

[42] Davis McEntire, "Alternative Models of Regional Organization," University of California, Berkeley, 1972.

[43] Williams and Lassey, op. cit.

[44] James D. Preston and Patricia B. Guseman, "The Development of Multi-County Regions in Texas," Department Report 71-10, Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Texas A & M University, College Station, September 1971.

[45] Isao Fujimoto and Martin Zone, "Land, Power, and Institutional Arrangements for Rural Community Services," Working Paper, Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences, University of California, Davis, 1974.

Conclusions

Although much of the research reported here offers compelling reasons for the failures of local government to successfully provide quality public services, the solution does not lie in the elimination of existing local governmental units. Rather, local units of government are going to have to be strengthened if the locus of political power is to begin shifting back to where local people exercise greater control over the provision of their public services. Local governmental units indeed provide a mechanism for "fine-tuning" plans developed at the regional, state, or national levels for implementation at the local community level, and also provide the single most important vehicle through which citizens can acquire more direct control over local public service programs. Nevertheless, local governmental units have not developed and many cannot develop sufficient organizational and leadership skills to provide services requested of them. Researchers in Montana, for example, document severe inadequacies in the training and expertise of local government personnel, severe shortages of funds to provide the kinds of rural services citizens request and expect, and inadequacies of existing jurisdictional boundaries for provision of services.[46] However, local citizens in rural communities are not apathetic or unresponsive to problems of service delivery. They are highly concerned, although perhaps at times resigned to living with public service conditions inferior to those of their urban counterparts.

Perhaps if local governments had more effective access to resources from state, regional, and federal sources, and if local governments were thereby encouraged to begin developing managerial and technical skills, provision of locally controlled and directed public service programs would proceed much more successfully. If we bring decision-making to the citizen or grass-roots level, perhaps those programs designed to alleviate problems of rural living would be more "in tune" with the real problems rural residents face, and the "fine-tuning" needed to adapt federal, regional, and state programs to local community needs would occur more naturally.

However, bringing decision-making to the citizen level means more than merely "fine-tuning" existing public programs to meet local needs. It means that local citizens must be making meaningful inputs into the formulations of national social and economic policies and be involved in determining structure and processes through which these policies reach the community level. Roland Warren argues that the contests having major impact on local communities are fought and resolved in the national political arena. "Local communities need to take an active role in shaping the national future, rather than merely making purely local adaptations to that future. They are shaped by the national society, and they can exercise a greater voice in national policy-making than they have in the past. Without such influence in national policy, community development efforts will necessarily be confined to relatively superficial issues leaving untouched those major issues, policies, and actions which determine a large part of the fate of the local communities and local people."[47] The challenge to the community development practitioner is quite clear.

The community development practitioner is in a unique position to help bring about some fairly radical changes in the economic and political structure of rural America by becoming an advocate of community interests and community control over the resources of development. By fostering strong horizontal patterns in the community, he will assist the community in mobilizing internal resources and in capturing outside resources by helping develop political sophistication among community citizens to force accountability and affect policy in both larger units of government and large private corporations. Only through strengthening local governmental units—by bolstering their administrative, organizational, and technical expertise, and by increasing their financial resources—can the quality of rural public services begin to satisfy needs and expectations of rural citizens.

[46] Williams and Dick, op. cit.

[47] Roland L. Warren. "External Forces Affecting Local Communities—Bad News and Good News," *Journal of the Community Development Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 1975, p. 13.

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